DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 384 928 CS 508 970

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TITLE The High Tech Road to Making an Oral Report.
PUB DATE 17 Jun 95
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the National Education Computing Conference (Baltimore, MD, June 17, 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Communication Skills; *Computer Uses in Education; Electronic Mail; Information Sources; *Public Speaking; Reinforcement; *Research Skills; Secondary Education; Secondary School Students; *Visual Aids
IDENTIFIERS *Oral Presentations

ABSTRACT

Using the "3 R's of Reporting" (Research, Reinforce, Rehearse) provides the process secondary students need to overcome their fear of making oral presentations. Much of this anxiety can be reduced by teaching students to use electronic supports for the research, preparation, and delivery of oral reports. Online bulletin board systems, electronic mail, and the telephone are three nonprint sources that students can use during their research for their reports. Students can also use "reinforcers"--props that give substantive support to the oral presentation. Examples of reinforcers include computer-generated time banners, post cards, and book marks. For the third R (Rehearse), students can use camcorders to rehearse their presentation, helping them avoid mannerisms; practice giving out the reinforcers; and learn what to do when they make a slip. (An appendix presents an outline and brief description of the 3 R's of Reporting.) (RS)

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Presentation made at
National Education Computing Conference (NECC)
Baltimore, MD, June 17, 1995

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

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The High Tech Road to Making an Oral Report

According to polls taken in middle and high schools, oral reports are one of the school activities most dreaded by students. Many students report that research, preparation, and especially the delivery of oral reports are sources of extreme anxiety. Much of this anxiety can be reduced by teaching students to use electronic supports at all three phases, or steps, of the assignment. In our book, *Upgrade: The High Tech Road to School Success*, we call these steps the 3 R's of Reporting.

We'll use two topics to illustrate our points. The first is how we use electronic supports to help our own writing efforts and to prepare for presentations like this one. The second topic is one that a student might choose in a history class—the use of motorcycles in World War I.

The first **R** of the 3 R's of Reporting stands for **Research**. If your students are like those we've taught, they need a nudge to use anything beyond an encyclopedia and other conventional sources. Giving them a list helps so we've tried to prepare a rather comprehensive one. [See Appendix A.] Obviously, depending on the topic you assign, you'd emphasize particular sources.

There's time to talk about only two nonprint sources that students might use—online Bulletin Board Services (BBSs) and telephones.

Online services can be used for research in at least 3 ways:

- to locate information,
- to post a question, and
- to interview someone via e-mail.

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First, students can locate information. For example, we needed a list of editors who accept online submissions for an article we were writing and found the list surfing through the World Wide Web.

Second, students can post a question and request an answer. My co-author wanted some anecdotes about Ray Charles and posted on America Online a request for anyone to e-mail her who had a story to contribute. A woman several states away responded. Such sleuthing is possible for the average person only with modern technology.

And finally, students can interview online. Again, my co-author received one of the most charming notes we've seen. The young lady asked, "Will you adopt me electronically for my project?"

Please remind your students a follow-up e-mail is appreciated. After giving several hours to typing answers to a young lady's questions about writing as a profession, we never heard from her again. Because high tech can be so anonymous, manners often are ignored, so remember to stress to your students that "please" and "thank you" mean as much online as face-to-face.

One other source we want to mention that is often overlooked by young researchers is the telephone. If you have teens of your own, you know what a compatible match kids and phones are. With the growth of 800 numbers and relatively cheap phone rates, phone use for gathering information is easier.

A writer friend told me about a great gadget that hooks to a phone and then connects to a tape recorder to record a conversation. The device we use is probably carried by other places but we can give you the Radio Shack information [Duofone, catalog #43236, $24.99]. We get no money for advertising this! There are $3.00 cheap suction devices but they aren't reliable. I've never had the Duofone fail and

I've used it a lot. By the way, in most states, including Maryland, the caller is required by law to tell the person at the other end that the call is being recorded. Your principal may be so pleased at your requesting a piece of equipment that costs only $25 that he or she will buy one.

Faxes, of course, also use phone lines and are daily becoming a viable research tool. For non-e-mail interviewing a 2-step process works well:

(1) fax questions and confirm the date and time of a phone call, and then

(2) record the actual telephone interview.

Faxing and tape recording combined are a relatively cheap and productive use of technology for research.

Then, after the student has all the information and ideas collected, computers and word processors are highly effective for organizing and writing the speech. A large clear font should be used and the student may want to put the notes on cards rather than sheets of paper. Our tendency is to help students find the way that's best for them, so we suggest giving them choices and then turning them loose to do it their own way.

The second **R** is for **Reinforce**. Reinforcers are not just props. A WWI helmet is a prop. The helmet is related to the topic of World War I and gets audience attention, but it does not give substantive support to the topic. Reinforcers are props that give substantive support to the oral presentation. They also help students with that dreaded problem—what do I do with my hands?

Reinforcers also help because they are personally generated and therefore more easily talked about by the speaker. They are a kind of teen-age show and tell experience.

Here are some examples of reinforcers we have generated on our computers and on copiers. The first one we have chosen, in contrast to a helmet, is not just a prop. It is directly related to the topic. It is a sheet of sticker stamps of a World War I motorcycle that shows how the cycle of that time was more like a moped or motorized bicycle than like the big bikes of today. It helps the audience members who receive the stamps better understand how the motorcycle could whiz about the German countryside and be easily uprighted when the rider fell. The stamps were made by drawing the cycle using a simple draw program. It was then printed on a laser printer using sticky backed paper, the kind sold to make address labels but without cut lines. Then we ran the sheets through a sewing machine with no thread to make easily torn perforations. Larger stickers for bicycle bumpers or notebooks could be made the same way.

Other examples of reinforcers are: computer-generated time banners, post cards, and book marks. Students soon learn that by using paint and draw programs, printers, copiers, special papers and imagination they can devise useful reinforcers that make the presentation more interesting to themselves and their audience. Paul Fleischman's book, *Copier Creations*, offers a wealth of ideas with specific directions for carrying them out.

The third **R** is for **Rehearse**. This is the topic that most students are already familiar with. Students have a variety of ways to rehearse with the goals of gaining confidence and avoiding making a presentation that sounds canned. If you have a camcorder in your school that students can use after school, have students use it to rehearse their speeches. These days, of course, many, many families have camcorders at home. Show students how to use them to avoid mannerisms that could interfere with audience attention, to practice giving out the reinforcers, and to learn

what to do when they make a slip.

Other helpful aids for rehearsing are tape recorders for voice pitch and clarity—and even trying out the speech on the telephone to a long-suffering friend.

Using the 3 R's of Reporting provides the process students need to overcome their fear of making oral presentations. As we tell the readers in *Upgrade*, we hope they "'break a leg.' We can't think of a better way to say 'good luck,' even in today's new high-tech world, than with that old stage cliché."

The 3 R's of Reporting[1]

The first R stands for Research.

Depending on your topic, access information via nonprint materials or conventional printed materials.

Information Sources

Check each source that you end up using for your report.

Printed Materials

- ❑ Books
- ❑ Newspapers
- ❑ Magazines
- ❑ Letters
- ❑ Pamphlets/Monographs
- ❑ Government documents

Nonprint Materials

- ❑ Movies
- ❑ Television
- ❑ Videotapes
- ❑ Audiotapes
- ❑ Performances
- ❑ Electronic mail
- ❑ Interviews
- ❑ Microfilm/ Microfiche
- ❑ Online materials
- ❑ Computer software

The second R stands for Reinforce.

Prepare props/reinforcers that will involve listeners and maintain their interest in what you're saying (without being distracting) and will help you with the problem of what to do with your hands.

Here are some ideas to consider using:

- **pictures**
- **stickers**
- **stamps**
- **bookmarks**
- **bumper stickers**
- **transfers on tee shirt**
- **copies of e-mail**
- **charts/graphs**
- **music tapes**
- **taped interviews**
- **banners**
- **postcards**
- **photos/slides**
- **posters**

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[1]Adapted from *Upgrade: The High-Tech Road to School Success* by Wirths & Bowman-Kruhm, Davies-Black Publishing, 1995.

The third R stands for Rehearse.

Use a camcorder, tape recorder, or mirror to rehearse your report. Why?

- **To check mannerisms.**
- **To gain confidence.**
- **To check prop use.**
- **To practice correcting a verbal slip.**
- **To time your talk.**
- **To practice handling notecards.**
- **To get audience reaction (if shown to family/friends).**
- **To note errors.**
- **To be sure you can start.**
- **To be sure you can *stop*!**

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